

## HEARTS N' PARKS: 3RD P—PUBLIC VISIBILITY

“If a tree falls in the forest and there’s nobody there to hear it, does it still make a sound?” That old question highlights the challenge for Hearts N’ Parks. This project doesn’t exist unless people hear about it. The relationship between CVD and heart-healthy programs is worthy of great visibility.

Take up the challenge of raising awareness of cardiovascular disease and the role individuals can play in reducing their disease risk. Now is the best time to raise the visibility of Hearts N’ Parks and to show people in your community how you are working to improve their health.

### WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

Who needs to know about Hearts N’ Parks? Somewhere between lots of people and everybody.

Given the large audience, you need to use many different strategies for getting the word out. Hearts N’ Parks offers five approaches to greater program visibility:

- Defining Hearts N’ Parks messages
- Modifying the messages
- Moving the messages
- Holding special events
- Working with the media.

Elaboration of these approaches is provided in the following sections.

### WRITING HEARTS N’ PARKS MESSAGES

Some people who know a great deal about the causes of CVD will live in your community along with people who are unaware that CVD is a serious health threat or that people can reduce their risk. Other people may be aware of ways they can reduce their risk for CVD who aren’t interested in making any changes in their behavior. The “stages of change” in the “1st P—People” come into play here.

Although the program’s overall message is the value of adopting heart-healthy behavior, the program uses various levels of the message to move people from awareness to action.

At the broadest level, the goal is to raise awareness of the seriousness of cardiovascular disease. The hope is that a progression of messages will result in people participating in activities that support heart-healthy behaviors.



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.



Risk factors for heart disease are:

*High Blood Cholesterol*

*High Blood Pressure*

*Smoking*

*Diabetes*

*Being Overweight*

*and*

*Lack of Physical Activity.*



Fortunately, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of heart disease.



Two of those actions you can take involve increased leisure-time physical activity and heart-healthy eating.



Your community is involved in a National program, Hearts N' Parks, that addresses heart-healthy eating and physical activity.



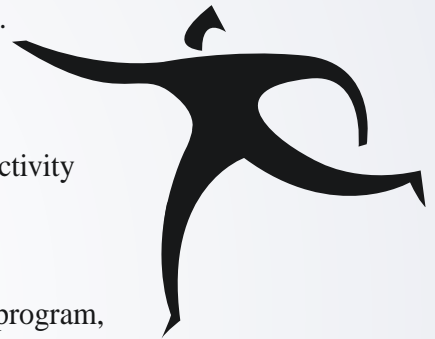
There are individuals or community groups who can play a part in the Hearts N' Parks program and its success.



People can learn more and become involved in physical activity and heart-healthy eating activities at your department.



Types of activities and programs offered along with dates, times and locations.



The table on page 47 shows each stage of change and the corresponding message goal and suggestions.



*Do you know?*

Stages of Change	Message Goals and Suggestions
<b>Precontemplation</b>	To raise awareness of CVD. "Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States."
<b>Contemplation</b>	To raise awareness of the important role of the individual in relation to the risk factors. " <i>You</i> can make a positive change."
<b>Preparation</b>	To encourage involvement in heart-healthy behavior and encourage individuals to participate in your programs. "These programs are accessible, and activities are easy to start—no experience or skill required."
<b>Action</b>	To tell individuals how to get started and help them stay involved. Introduce other activities and options for them as well as ways to break barriers, etc.
<b>Maintenance</b>	To focus on sustained, continued activity. "Keep up the good work."
<b>Termination</b>	To offer continued access and availability. "We're your partners in healthy lifestyles."
Another stage of change is quite common: relapse. For a variety of reasons, people with the best of intentions stop their involvement. It's important that we don't overlook this natural, human progression.	
<b>Relapse</b>	To give options for restarting healthy habits and behavior. "Don't let periodic lapses become a reason to give up."

## MODIFYING THE MESSAGES

Initially, the messages are intended to provide information and create awareness, but over time you want to influence people to move through the stages of change. Strategies for modifying the messages:

**Program Titles**—Change the names of your programs. Rather than just listing the name of the program—Walking, Ethnic Cooking, etc.—consider adding some of the following phrases:

- Getting Started...(Walking, Aerobics, etc.)
- Time To Try...(Hiking, Biking, etc.)
- How About...(Healthy Food Shopping, etc.).

Program titles for those who have already adopted heart-healthy behavior might focus on words of encouragement:

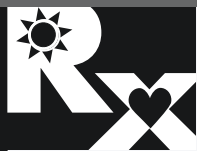
- Keeping at It (Walking, Aerobics, etc.)
- Moving from Walking to Hiking
- Now On to Healthy Cooking
- Learning More About (Biking, Low-Fat Cooking, etc.).

**Program descriptions**—These too can be modified. To reach people who are thinking about getting started, the description could address:

- Assistance in overcoming reluctance to change behavior
- Techniques for learning skills
- Methods of making the behavior doable.

### Example

"Have you thought about becoming more physically active? How about walking as a way to improve your health and well-being? Join us in an easy walking plan."



*The Practical Guide on Overweight and Obesity in Adults* offers information that can be used to help people change their behavior.

### **Set the Right Goals**

Setting the right goals is an important first step. Most people trying to lose weight focus on just that one goal: weight loss. The most productive areas to focus on, however, are the dietary and physical activity changes that will lead to that long-term weight change. Successful weight managers select two or three goals at a time that meet the following criteria of useful goals:

Effective goals are (1) specific; (2) attainable; and (3) forgiving (less than perfect). "Exercise more" is a commendable ideal, but it's not specific. "Walk 5 miles everyday" is specific and measurable, but is it attainable if you're just starting out? "Walk 30 minutes every day" is more attainable, but what happens if you're held up at work one day and there's a thunderstorm during your walking time another day? "Walk 30 minutes, 5 days each week" is specific, attainable, and forgiving. In short, a great goal!

To influence people to sustain a heart-healthy behavior, program descriptions could incorporate language on:

- Reinforcing skills
- Making the new behavior manageable
- Keeping activities enjoyable
- Encouraging mutual support.

#### **Example**

"Looking for ways to continue your venture into physical activity? How about learning

more about biking OR taking the next step in aerobics OR looking for more tasty, low-fat meal ideas."

### **MOVING THE MESSAGES**

There are a number of ways available to help you reach the intended audiences for Hearts N' Parks messages:

- Existing resources
- Internal opportunities
- Extension strategies.

## *Resources*



The NHLBI has prepared a substantial number of fact and information sheets on heart-healthy activities and heart-healthy eating. You can order these from NHLBI or reproduce many of the sheets in the reproducible section in this guide and distribute them. The NRPA also has materials that can be helpful to your audience.



## INFORMATION SHEETS

	Children	Adolescents	Adults
Healthy Eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat Right for a Healthy Heart</li> <li>• Snacks Like These Are Okay</li> <li>• Find the Foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay Young at Heart Menu</li> <li>• Dining Out—How to Choose</li> <li>• Foods in the Fast Lane</li> <li>• Putting Heart Healthy Eating Habits Into Play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart Healthy Eating Plan</li> <li>• Help Your Family to Better Heart Health</li> <li>• Cooking the Heart-Healthy Way</li> <li>• Shop to Your Heart's Content</li> <li>• Dining Out—How to Choose</li> <li>• Stay Young at Heart Menu</li> </ul>
Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Moving Fast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Activity and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> <li>• Get Physical</li> <li>• Guide to Physical Activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help Your Family to Better Heart Health</li> <li>• Physical Activity and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> <li>• Guide to Physical Activity</li> </ul>
Obesity & Overweight		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check Your Weight and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on Overweight and Obesity</li> <li>• Check Your Weight and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> <li>• Heart Healthy Eating Plan</li> </ul>
High Blood Pressure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Heart I.Q.</li> <li>• High Blood Pressure Prevention I.Q.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Heart I.Q.</li> <li>• High Blood Pressure Prevention I.Q.</li> </ul>
High Blood Cholesterol		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Heart I.Q.</li> <li>• Cholesterol and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tips to Help Older Americans Control Cholesterol</li> <li>• Healthy Heart I.Q.</li> <li>• Cholesterol and Heart Disease I.Q.</li> </ul>

## CONSUMER FRIENDLY MESSAGE

The message below is in the Surgeon General's report on physical activity. It attempts to make people aware that even a small amount of time spent in physical activity is worth the effort. It also reminds people that moderate physical activity can be enjoyable. Consider using this language for a display item targeting current, casual, and potential participants in your program.

*Life is short. So is 30 minutes. 30 minutes of "moderate" physical activity a day. A brisk walk. A romp with the kids. A dance break. Hard to believe that so much fun can dramatically reduce your risk of serious disease and early death. Even if it's done 10 minutes at a time. And considering that it decreases stress and increases your energy, you may not only live longer, you'll probably enjoy it more. Physical Activity. A little goes a long way.*

Source: *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, DHHS 1996.

# SOS

*Signs of Success*



Exercise boosts our immune system, releases endorphins and serotonin which all help elevate our feeling of well-being and energy level.

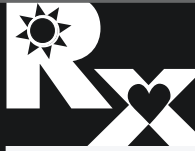
Neenah Parks & Recreation from Setting the Course



Grant Park—Sign Board from Setting the Course



**Bene-E-Fit Bear, Mascot**  
Incline Village, Nevada Parks and Recreation Department,  
from Setting the Course



The NHLBI Web site is a good source of information. You can use this excerpt from the site as a model for turning information into heart-healthy activity. (The information included here is not presented in its entirety. You can find it at the NHLBI Web site as part of a set of booklets for *Improving the Cardiovascular Health of African Americans*.)

#### **Move Your Body!**

Change your habits by adding activity to your daily routine. Any movement burns calories. The more you move, the better. Try some of these simple activities to get you started today.

#### **Perk up:**

Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning and stretch.  
Jog in place.  
Ride your stationary bike while watching TV.  
Work out along with an exercise video.

#### **Do a quick workout:**

Use the stairs instead of the elevator.  
Walk to the bus or train stop.  
Walk to each end of the mall when you go shopping.  
Park your car a few blocks away from your destination and walk.

#### **Have fun:**

Play your favorite dance music. Do the old steps you love—add some new moves.  
Jump rope or play tag with your kids or grandkids.  
Use handheld arm weights during a phone conversation with a friend.

Source: *Energize Yourself! Stay Physically Active*, NHLBI, and NIH Office of Research on Minority Health

## **INTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Use the resources in this guide to reinforce the Hearts N' Parks message inside your agency. Try to have the message incorporated into departmental vehicles, such as:

- Flyers, brochures, bulletin boards, sign boards, newsletters, etc.
- Printed forms, such as fax cover sheets, meeting agendas, and registration forms.
- High-tech messages—voice mail, recorded updates, e-mail messages.
- Personal contact—continue to meet face to face with decision-makers, partners, and staff involved in the project.

## **EXTENDING YOUR REACH**

Hundreds of people enroll in your programs—hundreds more pass by your parks and

facilities. Extend your reach by placing messages in places where they can be seen, such as:

- Posters and information near rest rooms and refreshment facilities.
- Fact and tip sheets in high traffic locations.
- Brochures at special events and community occasions.
- Hearts N' Parks video as part of a display or part of a talk to a local civic or service club. (See “Holding Special Events” for more information.)
- In the mail, accompanying local utility bills, paychecks, and brochures and the newsletters of other human services agencies.



Remember to vary the message to reach people with different degrees of knowledge and readiness. By identifying places frequented by at-risk groups, casual participants, or nonparticipants, you can extend your reach even further. Some possibilities might include:

TARGET GROUP	PLACE OF CONTACT
<b>Teens</b>	Area or center where they drop in to play pool, etc. Park where they “hang out” afternoons or evenings.
<b>Parents dropping off children</b>	Sign boards outside building. Message in take-home flyers or forms.
<b>Families</b>	Distribute information at youth sports games. Signs at family picnic spots or child play areas.
<b>Senior citizens</b>	Announcements at social gatherings. Fact sheets at meal programs.

Contact individuals or agencies that may have contact with at-risk individuals and nonparticipants. This may involve providing materials for distribution by a social club, a self-help club, or a church.

## HOLDING SPECIAL EVENTS

You can tap into the popularity of existing special events or create some new ones for Hearts N’ Parks. Special events:

- Attract larger than usual numbers of people
- Attract the interest of the media
- May reach people at higher than average risk for CVD
- Can attract volunteers who learn more about CVD and heart-healthy behavior through their involvement
- Are opportunities to bring many community resources together.

Just remember that you don’t necessarily have to create something new. Almost any existing special event can be transformed into a Hearts N’ Parks opportunity.

What is a special event? A special event can last an hour, a day, or a week.

Here are some examples:

- A health and wellness fair
- An awards ceremony
- A ribbon-cutting event for new equipment or building(s)
- A news conference
- A Fourth of July festival.

In addition to each of these being an event by itself, each can be a part of a larger event. For example, at Arlington County, Virginia’s, Hearts N’ Parks launch, a news conference kicked off a full day of heart-healthy activities, including a health and wellness fair where people from local hospitals and other organizations performed blood pressure screenings and provided heart-healthy educational materials.

Remember, combining your activity with another event can be a win-win situation. Perhaps there’s a community awareness day in your town—why not ask to participate in the same way as part of a health and wellness fair? Or, hold your awards ceremony for participants in your Hearts N’ Parks programs during half-time at the local high school sporting event.



Regardless of which activities comprise the event, there are common steps that must be taken to make it successful:

### STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

1. Identify your goals, target audiences(s), key messages, and activities. An event takes a lot of time and other resources, and it should be a tool to reach goals, not an end in and of itself.
2. Identify and contact potential partners, cosponsors, and presenters, if appropriate.
3. Assemble a task force or committee for your event. Recruit from within your department or organization, potential partnering organizations, representatives from groups that are connected to your target audiences, community volunteers, etc.
4. Choose a date and location. Find out what else is going on around the time you want to hold your event and plan accordingly. You might be able to turn what would otherwise be a competing event into a partnership! (If you plan to have a legislator, local sports figure, or other celebrity participate, you may need to choose a date and location that best meets his or her needs.)
5. Promote your event to encourage attendance and media coverage.
6. Coordinate logistics.
7. Promote your event afterwards.

Documenting the event with photographs or videotape may be useful for future promotions. So you need to factor in the logistics for doing so, such as hiring a photographer. Keep in mind that you should obtain signed consent forms from individuals whose image or voice are recorded. Parents or guardians must provide consent forms for minors. This guide contains a sample consent and waiver form, as well as a sample cover letter in appendix C.

Thinking at least one step ahead is key. Use the Prototype Plan for Launching Your Program in appendix C, especially the timeline and check list to help stay on track.

Using Baltimore's SOS program as a model, the Medical University of South Carolina Blood Pressure Pilot Project conducted a similar program during a football game at a small, relatively rural, high school with a significant percentage of African American

students. Because the school's football games typically draw people from the entire community, the program was able to reach a sizable percentage of the population.

### WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Media coverage of Hearts N' Parks raises the visibility of your agency and helps to set the stage for recruiting partners or sponsors.

Successful media outreach is a multifaceted effort. First, identify your target audience and tailor your message accordingly. Remember that the audience is not the news media but their readers, listeners, and viewers. Reporters, editors, and producers are your messengers, but you must show them why your message is important. To do so, you must tailor your messages to key audiences and use an appropriate "hook" or angle to interest the media.

Here's a media strategy checklist:

- ✓ **Define your goal.** Are you trying to recruit participants to programs, draw attendance at an event, inform potential partners or sponsors?
- ✓ **Think about which audiences you want to target.** If your goal is to recruit program participants, do you want to reach children or adults? Do you want to reach individuals of certain ethnic or cultural backgrounds or from a specific socioeconomic class or neighborhood?
- ✓ **Develop an appropriate message.** Try to identify ONE key message and ONE call to action. The key here is to not try to communicate several concepts at once—that approach can backfire. For example:

**Key message:** “Hearts N’ Parks is an innovative, nationwide initiative that aims to reduce the growth in the number of obese people and the risk of coronary heart disease.”

**Call to action:** “Help us launch this exciting and prestigious program in our community by attending [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S SPECIAL EVENT, ETC.]”

**Key message:** “Two ways to reduce your risk of heart disease are to participate in regular physical activity and to eat heart-healthy foods.”

**Call to action:** “Register now to discover easy ways to be more active and eat healthfully by calling or visiting [YOUR ORGANIZATION].”

- ✓ **Create a targeted media list.** Be sure that your list is up-to-date and covers all media you are interested in contacting.





Another resource for incorporating special events is *The Sports Guide: NHLBI Planning Guide for Cardiovascular Risk Reduction Projects at Sporting Events* found in the NHLBI Educational Materials Catalog. NHLBI materials are available by contacting the NHLBI Information Center at (301) 592-8573 or online at <http://email.nhlbi.nih.net>. The catalog provides ideas related to various sports.

<b>Baseball/Softball</b>	<b>Strike Out Stroke</b> <b>Foul Out Far</b> <b>Home Run for Heart Health</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>Slam Dunk Stroke</b> <b>Hoops for Healthy Hearts</b>
<b>Soccer</b>	<b>Kick Out Stroke</b> <b>Score a Goal for Physical Activity</b>
<b>Football</b>	<b>Touchdown on Fat</b> <b>Down on Stroke</b>
<b>Boxing</b>	<b>Knock Out Stroke</b> <b>Weigh-In Light</b>
<b>Car Racing</b>	<b>Watch Your Pressure</b> <b>Finish First in the Health Lane</b>
<b>Bowling</b>	<b>Strike Out Stroke</b> <b>Strikes and Spares for a Healthy Heart</b>
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>Take Down Stroke</b>
<b>Demolition Derby</b>	<b>Demolish Stroke</b>
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>Love Physical Activity</b> <b>Net a Healthy Heart</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	<b>Dive into a Healthy Lifestyle</b>
<b>Track</b>	<b>Run for Life</b>



Strike Out Stroke (SOS) Week in Baltimore, Maryland, was a collaborative project involving the Baltimore Orioles, Community Health Assessment and Monitoring Programs, Bon Secours Hospital, the University of Maryland Medical School, and the NHLBI. This program targeted high-risk individuals through community events at barbershops, libraries, farmers' markets, community basketball courts, pharmacies, and grocery stores, and culminated at a Baltimore Orioles baseball game. The events were advertised through TV and radio PSAs, banners at the ballpark, and video screen announcements. Events included blood pressure screening, risk assessment quizzes on stroke and heart disease, and educational material hand-outs on a variety of health topics. In addition, young adults and adolescents from the community were taught CVD risk reduction and how to measure blood pressure.



## Do you know?

**Consider the following questions and suggestions when forming your media strategy:**

1. What are the best ways to reach your target audiences?
2. What newspapers do they read? What radio stations do they listen to?
3. Check the list of media contacts used by your agency, as well as any related agencies, partners, etc., to determine if you are missing any media outlets.
4. If you are holding a special event, don't forget to notify calendar editors, including those on community Web sites.
5. How will you distribute your materials—by fax, by mail, by e-mail?
6. Make sure your list includes all the information you need to reach your targeted media.
7. Whenever possible, note media deadlines for submitting information.

- ✓ **Prepare the tools you need to inform the media effectively.** These include news releases, fact sheets, brochures, or other background information. If you're planning an event, you might also need a media advisory (a "save the date" announcement), as well as a press kit with the above-mentioned tools plus an agenda, short bios of speakers, and copies of their speeches. Don't forget to include the five "W"s—what, when, where, who, and why—in the new release. Also, you'll need to identify the people in your

department or agency who are best able to serve as media contact or spokesperson.

- ✓ **Construct a timetable of outreach events and activities.** See sample Checklist and Timeline for Special Events and Prototype Plan for Launching Your Program in appendix C.
- ✓ **Decide how you will measure the success of your outreach efforts.** How many people participated in your program or event? How many newspapers, TV stations, etc., reported on your program as a result of your outreach?

## Resources



Materials for working with the media are found in this chapter and in the appendix

**At the end of the chapter:**

Proclamation by community officials—  
Arlington's promotional flyer

**In the appendix:**

Sample Pitch Letter for Media (appendix C)  
Story Ideas and Media Tips (appendix C)

Encouraging Media to Cover Your Event  
(appendix C)

Sample Media Advisory for Hearts N' Parks  
Launch at Local Site (appendix C)

Sample News Release (appendix C)

Background sheet—Hearts N' Parks (appendix F)

Background sheet—Get Moving for a Healthy  
Heart (appendix F)

Background sheet—Eat Right for a Healthy  
Heart (appendix F)

# SOS

## *Signs of Success*

### Excerpt of newspaper article from Roanoke Rapids:

By Robert DeAngelo, Herald Staff Writer

ROANOKE RAPIDS-What's better for you, an apple or a bowl of deep-fried pork rinds? Carrot sticks or a triple-scoop, marshmallow-laden hot fudge sundae? Walking a mile or getting a thumb cramp from channel surfing?

Those were pretty easy, but the Roanoke Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is hoping to increase awareness of heart-healthy habits in children and adults this week during their Hearts N' Parks/Keep the Beat campaign.

Roanoke Rapids is one of 11 communities in the state selected as a test site for the program, which seeks to educate both young and old on healthy eating plans along with moderate physical activity programs.

"We're trying to promote heart-healthy behavior," said Allen Overby, who is helping coordinate the program locally. "We want to emphasize that a plan of physical activity and nutrition is important throughout someone's entire life."

### Arlington County Hearts N' Parks "Kickoff":

In the summer of 2000, the Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources in Arlington, Virginia, kicked off the second year of Hearts N' Parks in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. A special launch event held on July 18 featured the Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, Olympic Figure Skating Champion Michael Weiss, NHLBI Director Dr. Claude Lenfant, and others at a press conference. Activities included healthy food demonstrations; physical activity demonstrations including tennis, volleyball, and jumping rope; sidewalk chalk art; and a performance by the "Merry Makers," a senior citizen music and dance troupe.







### **Here's a way to keep up with the latest in heart-health research and NHLBI activities:**

Bookmark the NHLBI Web site, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov), and check the site regularly. (See especially the "What's New" and "News & Press Releases" sections.) You can also subscribe to the

NHLBI Health Information Network which provides members with information and educational opportunities applicable to everyday activities. For example, let's say NHLBI posts a news release about a new study showing that teens as a group are becoming increasingly overweight. You might send out a news release or a letter to the editor that summarizes the research (because NHLBI is a Federal agency, you can copy an excerpt verbatim)—be sure to cite your source—and explain how your program offers opportunities to help teens lose weight (or better yet, how effective your program is in helping them lose weight).

## **MEDIA CONTACT IS ONGOING**

It's important to capture media attention when launching a new project such as Hearts N' Parks. It is equally important to try to keep the message and activities of Hearts N' Parks in the public eye. How do you go about doing that? Some things you can do:

- Provide the media with information on new heart-healthy programs or services that you are offering. Announce new partnerships with other organizations. Keep your media contact and spokesperson informed about any new developments in your program.
- Ask local officials to proclaim your city, town, or county a Hearts N' Parks community and invite the media to cover it. Include a copy of the proclamation with your news release.
- Include Hearts N' Parks materials at every appropriate public event. Try to keep your materials recognizable with a standard design or logo.
- Stay on top of medical research related to Hearts N' Parks and tell the media about it. Use only reputable sources of information, such as the NHLBI.
- Pitch ideas for a feature article to select media. The focus of the feature could be a program participant who has been exceptionally successful or who has overcome unique challenges, a volunteer who has contributed significantly, a corporate sponsor that has generously contributed to the community's well-being, or the history or evolution of park and recreation programs in your area.
- Expand your contacts with the media so information about Hearts N' Parks and heart-healthy behavior is featured in various sections of the newspaper—e.g., sports, lifestyle, weekend, or activity section—as well as radio stations that attract different groups of listeners. Take note of reporters—including freelancers—who cover related stories and add their names to your list of media contacts.
- Try to find media that appeal to at-risk individuals or nonparticipants you want to reach. Identify new media possibilities by reading neighborhood or small weekly newspapers and listening to different radio stations.
- Invite members of the media to become partners with the Hearts N' Parks effort in your community. Local TV and radio stations as well as newspapers often adopt special causes to show their support for the community.

## Do you know?



Ways to make your activities newsworthy:

Provide a local angle on this national story; editors use local stories far more often than out-of-town stories.

Provide details on the impact of your agency's activities on local people, businesses, or quality of life.

Ensure visual appeal. Visuals include photos (preferably "action" shots of a key individual in action), maps, graphs or charts, and visual identifiers (e.g., logos) of your agency.

Timely distribution of up-to-date information that is respectful of media deadlines.

Keep in mind, however, that more does not always equal better. Reporters constantly receive story ideas, and repeated attempts to gain media coverage can backfire. When you contact reporters, be sure you have an idea they might be interested in—and make their job easier by providing them with all the information they need.

### NEWS RELEASES

Much of the news that is printed or broadcast is from news releases. Your release may be the first—and perhaps only—information a reporter receives about your program. It should be written as if a reporter wrote it, because it may be printed or broadcast verbatim. Or a reporter may use only portions of the release or supplement it with additional information from you, your program partners, interviews with key people, or their own sources.

Here are some hints for writing a news release:

- Write a headline that sells the story.
- Prepare a lead paragraph with the five Ws—who, what, when, where, and why (or how).

- Incorporate accurate information from reputable sources, with the most important details in the first few paragraphs.
- Use quotations that bring the story to life from influential people in the community as well as participants. You might compose draft quotes that are approved by the people for whom the quotes are written. This is a fairly common procedure and may be preferred by the people being quoted.

In addition, prepare a professional-looking news release by:

- Keeping it to no more than two pages. You can provide additional material through fact sheets, interviews, etc.
- Presenting it on a letterhead with the name and phone number of your agency's contact person.
- Proofing it to ensure that it is error-free.



## SAMPLE: ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA'S, HEARTS N' PARKS

This text from the Arlington, Virginia, program is an example of the kind of information you could use for your program's flyer. Consider adding a logo or clip art to make your program's flyer more colorful.

### What is Hearts N' Parks?

Hearts N' Parks is an exciting new national program sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The goal of the program is to create model community-based programs to increase the number of children and adults who engage in heart-healthy behaviors.

### Why Arlington?

Arlington County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources is honored to be hand-selected as a pilot site. Arlington was selected because the NHLBI and the Surgeon General's Office recognize the many ways that community parks and recreation programs positively affect the well-being of people. We are proud to offer programs that demonstrate Arlington as A Hearts N' Parks Community!

### What is the Arlington Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources doing to promote Hearts N' Parks?

Kids in the *elementary after school and playground camp programs*, as well as mature adults in the *senior adult programs*, are participating in more physical activities while learning about the importance of a heart healthy diet.

The Hearts N' Parks logo will be found on trail maps, mile markers, and other promotional materials for programs and facilities that offer heart-healthy activities.



The *Recreation and Leisure* class catalog will promote a series of heart-healthy classes in the fall of 2000.



## SAMPLE: (CONTINUED)

*Thomas Jefferson Community Center and Barcroft Sport and Fitness Center* will be flagship sites for Hearts N' Parks, offering a safe and affordable place to be active.

### **What can Arlingtonians do to promote heart-healthy behaviors?**

These simple tips will help control body weight, prevent/control obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, which are major risk factors for cardiovascular disease:

- Get regular physical activity—You need to engage in only about 30 minutes of moderate-level activity, preferably, all days of the week.
- Choose a diet that is low in saturated and total fat and cholesterol.



- Follow an eating plan that balances caloric intake with your level of physical activity. This is the key to maintaining a healthy body weight, or even losing weight if you are overweight.

### **Where can I find more information about the Hearts N' Parks program in Arlington?**

Please call \_\_\_\_\_  
at \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Where can I find more information about the Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources?**

For information about the Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources, please visit our Web site at <http://www.co.arlington.va.us>. Pick up a copy of the latest Recreation and Leisure catalog at your local library or community center. Call 703-228-5920 to request information to be mailed.





# Public Visibility

## *Countdown Checklist: 3rd P—Public Visibility*

### **GETTING STARTED**

#### **Messages**

\_\_\_ At a staff meeting, expose people to the Hearts N' Parks message and encourage them to take action according to their roles within the department.

#### **Media**

\_\_\_ Create or revise a list of media contact names and numbers.

\_\_\_ Identify media tools you'll need—such as a media advisory, news releases, background sheets. Create a schedule, then draft and distribute these items.

\_\_\_ Set up a date and time for community officials to proclaim your community a Hearts N' Parks Community, then arrange for media coverage.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

#### **Messages**

\_\_\_ Change your messages by modifying program titles and descriptions.

\_\_\_ Form a small group of staff who are willing to identify internal opportunities for spreading the message and then do so.

#### **Media**

\_\_\_ Extend your reach by partnering with local organizations or businesses and promoting Hearts N' Parks to their constituents.

\_\_\_ Think of different story ideas with a local angle or human interest approach and forward them to your media contacts. These should be targeted; do not send the same pitch letter to several media outlets.

\_\_\_ Expand your reach by contacting the people who write for the sports or lifestyle sections of local newspapers.

### **KEEPING THE BEAT**

#### **Messages**

\_\_\_ Continue to tell your message; don't assume that everyone has received it.

\_\_\_ Begin a new round of distributing information about the risks for CVD.

\_\_\_ Change your message to support people who have taken action and need to maintain this way of life.

#### **Media**

\_\_\_ Create a new special event or infuse a Hearts N' Parks emphasis into an existing special event. Invite the media to cover the event and become involved.

\_\_\_ Check the NHLBI Web site and alert local media contacts to new findings. Provide them with a local angle if you can.

# Frequently Asked Questions



## 1 Why do we need to involve the media?

Media support is crucial because it provides a way to reach the people of your community. Good media coverage can assist your program by attracting participants and outside partners.

## 2 What's a good first step to getting media exposure?

Using the example in the resource guide, write a news release that highlights the major details of your program (date, time, place, purpose, who's involved) and submit it to local newspapers and radio stations. When you submit the release, invite the paper or radio station to send a reporter to your program's launch.

## 3 What if our efforts to generate publicity don't result in a good turnout for the program?

If you've tried all possible ways to inform your community (radio spots, news releases, contacting media, putting up posters, handing out flyers, etc.), try encouraging participants to tell their friends and families about the program. Simple word-of-mouth tends to link people with shared interests. Also, find out how those involved became aware of the program. That should help you understand which communication methods are effective.

Whatever you do, don't give up. Change your approach if you have to—create a new slogan, make new posters, or hold a special event at a time when no other major events are happening.

